



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
LESTER SPELL, JR., D.V.M.
COMMISSIONER

CONSUMER ALERT – August 12, 2005

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State Agriculture Official Says Some Imported Vietnamese Fish Are Adulterated

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Lester Spell has issued a consumer alert for imported basa fish that may be tainted with unapproved antibiotics. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) is intensively scouring Mississippi for adulterated fish imports from Vietnam. Drug residue tests will be conducted if this product is found. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials have recently discovered that zero-tolerance antibiotics have been detected in basa fish imported from Vietnam.

“MDAC inspectors will begin today searching retail food establishments throughout Mississippi for basa fish, and particularly basa products from Vietnam,” Spell said. “Consumers should be aware and refrain from purchasing imported basa that may contain unapproved antibiotics.”

Initial samples were found in Louisiana and tested positive for fluoroquinolone class antibiotics, which were mixed in Vietnamese fish food. The primary health concern for this antibiotic is human consumption of adulterated fish may build a tolerance to the line of defense that antibiotics provide. Fluoroquinolones are commonly used to treat pneumonia, tuberculosis, bronchitis, and other infections.

Spell said that he and Dr. Brian W. Amy, Mississippi’s State Health Officer, have conferred on this matter and the two agencies are working together to survey retail food establishments, wholesale food distributors, and restaurants to find any adulterated product. The MDAC is sharing information with both the FDA and other state departments of agriculture in an effort to locate the adulterated product. Spell said that Louisiana Department of Agriculture Commissioner Bob Odom informed him this morning Louisiana officials was placing this product off sale.

“When a zero-tolerance policy is there, it has to be enforced and that’s what we’re doing,” Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Bob Odom said. “We cannot put regulations and constraints on our producers and then allow imported food to violate those regulations.”

This product is known to be packaged under the label of LA Fish, an importer from California. MDAC, in conjunction with other state agencies and the FDA, is working to prevent the distribution of contaminated products.